2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

2.1 LOCATION

The Crossroads Redevelopment Project Area is located in San Diego County, in the City of San Diego. The Redevelopment Project Area is approximately 1,032 acres in size. The proposed Project Area is situated in the southeastern portion of the City of San Diego and can be generally categorized into three subareas as follows:

- Subarea A — The generally commercial areas along El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue from 54th Street on the west to the city limit with La Mesa on the east, including the parcels fronting College Avenue between Montezuma Boulevard on the north and University Avenue on the south; and including parcels fronting Chollas east of 54th Street.

  Portions of the Fox Canyon residential area south of University Avenue between Euclid Avenue and 54th Street.

  The residential area along Streamview Drive from 54th Street on the west and College Grove Drive on the east.

- Subarea B — The area including Chollas Reservoir Park and Recreation Center generally bounded by Redwood and Thorn Streets to the north, the M.L. King, Jr. Freeway to the east and south and 54th Street to the west.

- Subarea C — The 4 acre subarea (includes public right-of-way) consists of neighborhood commercial and multi-family residential along the east side of 54th Street and north of College Grove.

2.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

A majority of the Redevelopment Project Area is developed. Existing development includes mostly older commercial and residential uses, with a smaller mix of office/professional, industrial, public/institutional uses and parks. Problem conditions that are proposed to be addressed through redevelopment include deterioration and dilapidation, defective design, substandard design, incompatible uses, inadequate lot size, residential overcrowding, depreciated/stagnant property values and impaired investment, low lease rates and high crime rates in portions of the Project Area.

The following provides a brief description of the environmental setting of the Crossroads Redevelopment Project Area. A more detailed description of the setting is provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.13 of the EIR.

Land Use

There is a mixture of land uses in the Redevelopment Project Area including commercial, residential, institutional, office/professional, industrial, and open space uses. Existing residential land use types include low density residential, low-medium density residential, medium/medium-high density residential and high density residential. The commercial uses are generally concentrated along El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue, two of the major roadways within the Redevelopment Project Area. The Redevelopment Project Area also contains public and institutional facilities, such as the Villa View Hospital, elementary schools, and numerous religious facilities. Major recreational areas include the Chollas Park and Recreation Center. The Chollas Lake Park is a resource based park, which includes Chollas Community Park, the Chollas Reservoir and its attendant land, some of which is part of an old abandoned landfill. The landfill has been capped and provides an opportunity for park development.

Biological Resources

A majority of the Redevelopment Project Area is developed and devoid of sensitive or native biological resources. However, there are areas that contain sensitive biological resources; primarily Chollas Park and Recreation Center, Chollas Creek, and several undeveloped finger canyons. A total of five vegetation communities have been delineated within the Redevelopment Project Area and include diegan coastal sage scrub, southern riparian scrub, eucalyptus woodland, disturbed habitat, and urban/developed. The Redevelopment Project Area is located within the City of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The MSCP is a comprehensive habitat conservation planning program for southwestern San Diego County. The MSCP preserves a network of habitat and open space, protecting biodiversity and enhancing the region's quality of life. The MSCP study area covers approximately 900 square miles (582,243 acres) in southwestern San Diego County. The study area is bordered by Mexico to the south, National Forest lands to the east, the Pacific Ocean to the west and the San Dieguito River Valley to the north. The riparian habitat and sage scrub habitat along Chollas Creek in the Redevelopment Project Area is located within the Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) (90-100% conserved) and serves as part of a local wildlife corridor.

Traffic/Circulation

The Redevelopment Project Area is located adjacent to the major roadways within the Mid-City and College Area. These roadways include El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, and College Avenue. The existing average daily traffic on these roadways within the Redevelopment Project Area ranges between 18,800 to 23,300 along University Avenue, and 23,500 to 31,000 along College Avenue, and 19,700 to 21,300 along El Cajon Boulevard. These roadways are also served by bus routes. An existing Class II/III bikeway is located along 54th Street, and Class II/III bikeway facilities are proposed by the City along College Avenue, Chollas Parkway, and University Avenue.

Air Quality

The Redevelopment Project Area is located within the San Diego Air Basin. The area experiences a mediterranean-type climate and is characterized by cool summers, mild winters, occasional rainfall confined primarily to winter months, and fresh onshore breezes. Average seasonal temperatures range from the low 70s in the summer to the low 50s in winter. The overall average temperature is 61 degrees Fahrenheit. An average of 10 inches of rainfall occurs each year between November and April.

The San Diego Air Basin is classified as a "non-attainment area" as it does not meet federal and state air quality standards for ozone and state standards for particulate matter less than ten microns in diameter (PM_{10}). Air pollutants transported into the basin from the adjacent South Coast Air Basin substantially contribute to the non-attainment conditions in the San Diego Air Basin.

Noise

A majority of the Redevelopment Project Area fronts major roadways, as a result, the primary source of noise in the Redevelopment Project Area is generated from vehicular traffic located along these roadways. There are also other sources of noise in the project area as a result of stationary sources. For example, a commercial center with an auto service station generates noise as a result of the use of compressors and other equipment.

Landform/Visual Quality

Most of the Redevelopment Project Area is urbanized, and visual resources are limited. However, in general, the Mid-City area contains parks, trails, and canyons that contribute to the visual quality in the general Project Area. The most significant natural visual resources within the Redevelopment Project Area include the Chollas Creek, Chollas Park, and finger canyons.

Geology/Soils

The Redevelopment Project Area is not underlain by known active fault splays; however, the area is underlain by the La Nacion fault, which is considered "potentially active" (i.e., the fault exhibits evidence of movement during the last 2,000,000 years). Portions of the Redevelopment Project Area are identified as "Marginally Susceptible" and "Generally Susceptible" with respect to slope stability. The Chollas Creek valley along Chollas Parkway and University Avenue and along Auburn Drive between Wightman Street and Euclid Avenue may be subject to liquefaction.

Cultural Resources

Although eight cultural resource studies have been prepared in the Redevelopment Project Area, no prehistoric resources have been identified. There are two historically significant sites located in Chollas Lake Park (the remnants of a historic water utilities facility and the historical cement foundation/loading dock). Also there are several areas

with structures having the potential for historical or archaeological significance located along El Cajon Boulevard and College Avenue in the El Cerrito, College Park, Mesa Colony, and Rolando neighborhoods.

Hydrology/Water Quality

Chollas Creek is the primary hydrologic feature within the Redevelopment Project Area. Chollas Creek is a seasonal waterway that crosses the Eastern and City Heights communities, flowing diagonally from northeast to southwest. The creek continues through the neighborhoods of Southeast San Diego, finally reaching the San Diego Bay at the 32nd Street Naval Station. Much of the land bordering the creek is undeveloped due to intermittent flooding. The creek has been substantially modified and now consists of both earthen and concrete lined channels, and residential development, business complexes, roads, and freeways have segmented the creek's geography. Chollas Creek has highly variable flows, the highest flow rates are associated with storm events.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Properties within the Redevelopment Project Area are developed with retail and commercial businesses, including offices, medical facilities, stores, restaurants, dry cleaning facilities, gasoline service stations, and automobile repair facilities, as well as multi- and single-family residences. Hazardous materials issues associated with the various properties and businesses in the Redevelopment Project Area include chemical storage/hazardous waste storage, underground storage tanks (USTs) and above ground storage tanks (ASTs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and subsurface structures. Chemical storage and hazardous waste occurs at retail shopping centers (e.g.'s, automotive repair, dry cleaning, car wash), commercial buildings (e.g.'s, medical and dental facilities), the City of San Diego Chollas Operations Facility, and a gasoline service station.

Public Services and Utilities

Much of the infrastructure in the Redevelopment Project Area is deficient and in need of improvement. Schools and parks are the most notable deficiencies with respect to public services and utilities in the Redevelopment Project Area.

2.3 PLANNING CONTEXT

As a basis for the redevelopment of the project, the project will be consistent with the General Plan, community plans, and the Land Development Code (Zoning Ordinance) of the City of San Diego, as amended from time to time, and all other applicable state and local codes and guidelines.

Land Uses

In the City of San Diego, land use development is guided by the General Plan and the Land Development Code. Among the permitted land uses within the Project Area are: commercial, office/professional, public/institutional, recreational, and residential.

Progress Guide and General Plan

The Redevelopment Project Area is located entirely within the San Diego city limits. Land use and development within the City is governed by the City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan, adopted by the City in 1979. The Progress Guide and General Plan provide the City's development policies in the form of findings, goals, guidelines, standards, and recommendations. *Guidelines for Future Development,* Amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan (October 1, 1992), includes a Development Program that establishes goals, guidelines, and standards for redevelopment within the City of San Diego.

The Progress Guide and General Plan also establishes numerous community planning areas throughout the City. The proposed Redevelopment Project Area falls within two such community plans; the College Area Community Plan and the Mid-Cities Community Plan. The following describes the general character of each of these communities.

The College Area Community Plan

The College Area Community is located in the central part of the City of San Diego, along the southern rim of Mission Valley and approximately eight miles northeast of the downtown area. The plan area consists of approximately 1,950 acres and is developed primarily as a single-family community with approximately 56 percent of the developable land devoted to that use. The area has been impacted by San Diego State University, located on its northern edge and a deteriorating commercial corridor on its southern edge. Traffic congestion is also an issue confronting the community and is related to the large university-oriented population and through-traffic traveling to and from adjacent communities.

The College Area Community presents a dual visual image. Entrances to the community are along heavily traveled streets leading to the high activity area surrounding the University. Development along El Cajon Boulevard is auto oriented and visually fragmented, resulting in a busy and confusing image along the length of the southern boundary of the community. However, within one block of the main arteries of the community and within just a few blocks of the University, the character of the community changes. Here the streets are lightly traveled, tree-lined and curving, some ending in cul-de-sacs. Canyons and hillsides are visible. Houses in these neighborhoods exhibit architectural styles spanning five decades, but mature landscaping and similar scale of development give coherence to these neighborhoods.

The Mid-City Community Plan

Mid-City is a cluster of four communities: Normal Heights, Kensington-Talmadge, City Heights, and Eastern. Each of these communities has its own distinctive character, and its own community planning group. These communities are joined by the bond of El Cajon Boulevard (Old Highway 80), which in earlier days tied the region to points east. The proposed Redevelopment Project Area includes parcels that are within the City Heights and Eastern subareas.

City Heights Subarea

City Heights is located in the central Mid-City plateau, and is indented by a number of smaller canyons. The major canyon system that once existed has been replaced by North/South freeways (I-805, SR-15). The community's southern boundary is defined by the M.L. King, Jr. Freeway (SR-94). The Chollas Creek is located in the southern reaches of the community. Within City Heights there are a number of neighborhoods, all having their own unique identities, ranging from the very urban higher density to somewhat rural character with small single-family bungalows.

Chollas Creek and Fox Canyon

Chollas Creek and Fox Canyon is predominantly single-family homes with some multi-family development in areas off University Avenue.

Eastern Area Subarea

While the Eastern Area shares many of the same issues with Mid-City's other three communities, it is distinguished by its hilly topography and relatively newer development.

El Cerrito Heights

El Cerrito Heights is a hilly neighborhood. El Cerrito Heights is predominantly a single-family neighborhood with some multi-family development off the commercial corridors of El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue.

Rolando and Rolando Park

The rolling hills of Rolando and Rolando Park are among the more recently developed neighborhoods of Mid-City, with Rolando developing prior to World War II and Rolando park developing in the mid-1950's. Both communities are made up of predominantly single-family homes located along curving streets. There is also some multi-family residential located near the strip commercial development abutting El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue.

Darnell, Oak Park and Webster

These neighborhoods are of recent development in predominantly single-family homes, but also include some large multi-family complexes and a mobile home park in both Oak Park and Webster. The area of Streamview Drive, located in a canyon which is the boundary between Darnall and Oak Park, is currently the subject of a revitalization study.